

Sustainability and Environmental Management Section

## Memo

To: Regional Plan Citizen Advisory Committee

Through: Jim Cronk, Planning Director

Bob Caravona, Comprehensive Planning Manager

Kimberly Sharp, Neighborhood Planner

CC: Nicole Woodman, Sustainability Manager

From: Stephanie Smith, Sustainability Specialist

Date: October 27, 2011

Re: Community Resiliency Study

## Background

The Southwest is a region marked by rapidly changing socioeconomic and climate systems. The 2010 Census confirms that the Southwest is undergoing a dramatic demographic change, with the population of Arizona growing by almost 25 percent in the last ten years. At the same time much of the region has been in the grip of a drought that has persisted for more than a decade—exacerbated by soaring temperatures, increasing precipitation intensity, snowpack reductions and other climate-related changes. In the past two years, Flagstaff has experienced record warming, severe winter storms, record low moisture, catastrophic wildfires and subsequent flooding events.

As climate and related extreme weather conditions change, lives and livelihoods are increasingly at stake, as well as smart economic growth and community development. Flagstaff is beginning to plan and prepare to be more resilient to these changes. Flagstaff can respond to these increasing challenges by complementing response and relief efforts with preparedness and prevention measures.

## Resiliency Study Overview and Relationship with Regional Plan

Resiliency is built through awareness of how changes in climate conditions can impact the community's critical resources and in turn, the City's priorities. The City is currently conducting a resiliency study to assess our vulnerability of local systems, such as water, public health and forest health that have some risk of major catastrophic event such as flood, wildfire

or severe winter storm. This study will be an important planning tool to inform better decisions for strategic action and policies.

The City can be effective in reducing vulnerability to the changing climate by identifying how vulnerable our operating efficiency, public health, infrastructure and economic competitiveness are to climate variability, where we lack sufficient capacity to adapt, and what the risks are if we do not act. Planning now to be more resilient to these changes is fiscally responsible, while inaction now can lead to higher costs in the future.

The City's Resiliency Study supports the guiding principles of the Regional Plan. Specifically, the study aligns with smart growth principles by assessing the vulnerability of systems that are vital to the City. The study will build a comprehensive and clear understanding of our community's critical social, economic and environmental resources that are inherent to community health. The Resiliency Study has a mutual goal with the Regional Plan that a sustainable and diverse economy requires resiliency.

The results of the Resiliency Study will be shared with the Community Advisory Committee and Core Planning Team to help guide the development of Regional Plan policies that support community resilience.